

# Shrewsbury Public Schools

## Fiscal Year 2008 Transportation Budget

### Topics

- Background
- Procurement Regulations & Current Contract
- State Regulations, Service Levels, & Operations Management
- Ridership and Route Information
- Fee Program Management
- Out-of-District Transportation (Special Educ.)
- Budget Summary

## Procurement Regulations & Current Contract

- Procurement of bus service is regulated by MGL Ch:30B, Uniform Procurement Act
- Current contract is with AA transportation and runs Aug. 2005-Aug. 2008 and includes:
  - Home-to-school
  - Vocational high school
  - Athletics & field trips
- Factors impacting rate include:
  - Age of fleet, special equipment, length of service day (Tiers in AM, mid-day, PM)
  - We do not have a fuel escalation clause

## State Regulations, Service Levels, & Operations Management

- Service minimum stipulated by MGL: Ch:71. Must bus for free K-6- two or more miles from school, and all vocational high school
- Shrewsbury children attending D.O.E.- approved private schools in Shrewsbury eligible for similar service levels as public school students
- Can charge a fee for grades 7-12 and K-6 who live less than two miles from school

## State Regulations, Service Levels, & Operations Management

- District employed Transportation Coordinator, Ms. Linda Sweet
- AA Transportation employs branch manager, dispatcher, and all drivers
- Use Versatrans Routing Software and vendor required to access via network

## Ridership and Route Information

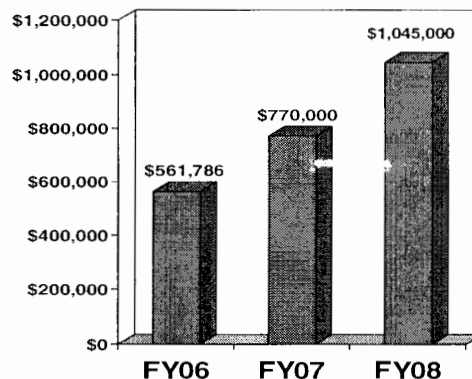
- 49 buses
- 15 different public and private schools (14 in Shrewsbury and 1 in Marlboro)
- 278 daily bus routes (AM, mid-day, PM)
- 4,677 students transported daily
- 75% of public school enrollment is bused

## Fee Program Management

- In year two of the program
- Improvements/modifications this year
  - Implement on-line payment option (16% or 344 families used)
  - Longer payment period (March-mid June)
  - Late fee imposed for missing application deadline decreased “last-minute” applications
  - New plastic pass (still produced in-house)

## Out-of-District Transportation

- Part of the Assabet Collaborative to share costs between districts
- Significant cost increases due to rate and enrollment increases
- Daily run to West Netwon = \$324/day or \$58,370 annually



## Budget Plan Factors

- No new buses
- According to *SMART* Priorities, keep fee the same as FY07 (\$210/rider with \$420 family cap)
- Add late bus service for grades 5-12. No fee included at this point.

## Budget Data

Service	FY07	FY08	Difference
Home-school & homeless	\$1,821,584	\$1,944,789	\$123,205
Assabet	\$55,944	\$58,182	\$2,238
Athletics	\$20,000	\$20,000	\$0
Late bus	\$0	\$53,000	\$53,000
Monitors (SPED/504)	\$223,000	\$223,000	\$0
SPED; Out-of-district	\$770,000	\$1,045,000	\$275,000
SPED: Summer	\$54,400	\$67,000	\$12,600
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>\$2,944,928</b>	<b>\$3,410,971</b>	<b>\$466,043</b>

## Questions and Discussion



**Shrewsbury Public Schools  
Massachusetts 01545**

**Patrick C. Collins  
Director of Business Services**

To: School Committee

Subj: FY08 SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION BUDGET

**Background**

As part of the ongoing FY08 budget development, this report is offered to provide greater detail with regard to school transportation services. Of the \$44.4M budget request, busing constitutes \$3.4M or 7.7% of the plan and as a result merits a more in-depth presentation.

It is also pertinent to note that school busing services are a mandated requirement for students who meet certain criteria. School transportation is a highly regulated service and industry. In addition, parents and students have safety and service-level expectations that must be met as well.

**Procurement regulations (MGL Ch:30B) & Current Contract**

Our current vendor, AA Transportation, Inc., was awarded a three-year contract for the period of August 2005 to August 2008. This was a result of a competitive bidding process that is regulated by MGL Ch:30B, otherwise known as the Uniform Procurement Act.

Under the terms of the contract the district pays a per-diem price per bus that is increased in years two and three by the Consumer Price Index for all goods and services in the Boston-metro area. Thus, despite the rapid rise in fuel prices since the contract was executed, we are in large part shielded from price volatility and this is obviously a good thing.

We have been pleased with AA Transportation which is a locally-based company. They have been attentive to managing their business in a most professional manner and have also been responsive to our issues. One simple example is their recent implementation of picture identification cards for all drivers and monitors. Although not part of the original contract, an agreement was easily reached in which the school district produced the cards and the management of AA Transportation required their staff to wear.

In addition to the "home-to-school" transportation, AA Transportation, Inc. was awarded contracts for all field trip and athletic transportation services for the district.

---

*The Shrewsbury Public Schools in partnership with the community, will provide students with the skills and knowledge for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, an appreciation of our democratic tradition, and the desire to continue to learn throughout life.*

## **State Regulations, Service Levels, & Operations Management**

MGL Ch:71, Section 68 regulates the state requirements (minimum service levels) for school transportation. In essence, it stipulates that all school children in grades K-6 who reside two or more miles from their school are entitled to a free bus ride. There is no requirement to transport other children, students in grades K-6 who live less than two miles from school, or students in grades 7-12. School-age children who are enrolled in Department of Education- approved private schools in Shrewsbury are entitled to same level of service (and subject to the same fee) as public school students. We are also required to provide free transportation to students who opt for Assabet Vocational High School and the town receives approximately 70% cost reimbursement for this service from the state. The vast majority of school districts do provide service above this service-level minimum; many charge a fee.

The Town of Shrewsbury has experienced rapid growth in population, housing developments, and school enrollment. We endeavor to provide a safe bus stop and ride that balances route efficiency with student safety. However, it is not our goal to provide everyone with the same bus service with respect to the distance from the home to the bus stop, the ride time, and load on the bus; this is simply not possible. Instead we attempt to keep ride times at or below thirty minutes. Although many might remember a “three-to-a seat” bus specification, this capacity is one that assumes each student will consume thirteen inches of space. This is clearly not a practical measurement to use, especially in today’s world where students are larger and typically carry back-packs and/or musical instruments each day.

The district employs a year-round Transportation Coordinator, Linda Sweet, who is responsible for all day-to-day operations. She develops routes using our routing software, Verstrans; records and processes all applications and fees; maintains ridership data; and interacts with the vendor and parents on a daily basis. (She also has many other duties within and beyond the description above.) This position requires a high skill level including a great deal of patience when dealing with a large number of customers with high expectations for service. Ms. Sweet does a very good job in handling the varied responsibilities within the context of this function.

The vendor is required by contract to have a full-time, on-site, branch manager and a full-time, on-site, dispatcher (two separate functions). These two people manage the drivers, the equipment, and coordinate all the training and licensing requirements. The vendor is also required to maintain access to our Versatrans system so as to be able to have the real-time information on routes and students as the district.

## **Ridership & Route Information**

With the implementation of the bus fee, quantification of ridership data has become easier to tabulate. The fact that all riders must apply for a pass allows the district to explicitly track its ridership data. Previously, bus routes were developed with estimations of participation and ridership, quantified by periodic bus counts.



On a daily basis, the district transports 4,677 (75% of total enrollment) students to fifteen public, private, and vocational schools. Forty-nine buses are under contract and complete 278 bus routes for morning, mid-day, and afternoon transportation each day.

It is a large and sometimes complex operation. School specific ridership statistics are included as a separate enclosure and with a color-coded fleet commitment schedule that depicts our routing operation on a single page.

### **Fee Program Management**

We are in “year two” of bus fees and with your approval made some significant changes this year to improve the management and administration of the program. First, we had a longer application period from March to June 15<sup>th</sup> that allowed parents to budget for the expense. This also allowed for a greater time period to communicate about the deadline and requirement for all riders to apply. Secondly, we chose UniBank to partner with us and offered an on-line payment system. Interestingly, 344 families or 16% of the paying customers, opted for the on-line payment method. Finally, we improved the look, durability, and production capacity of the bus passes by purchasing an identification card printer. All the bus passes and accompanying letters and mailings are produced in-house each summer in time for school opening. The operation leverages technology so as to minimize staff costs, but does require some additional temporary help to package the mailings.

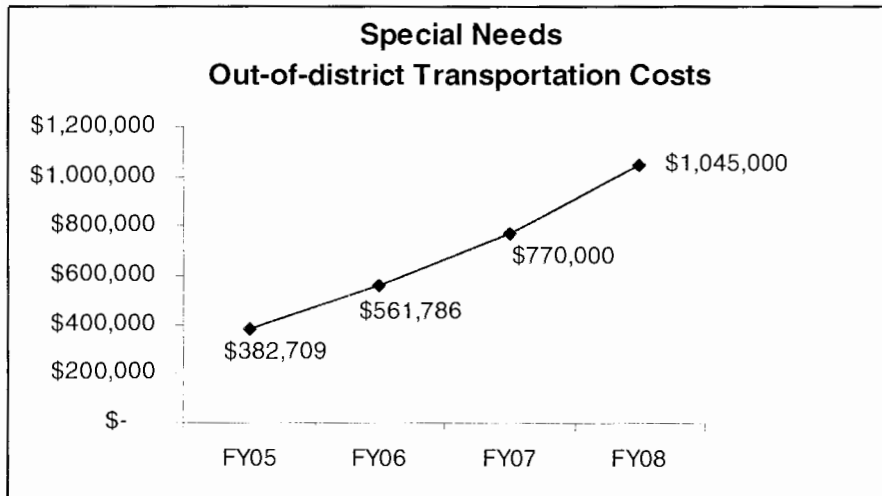
As a side note, students who are eligible for a free or reduced lunch are entitled to a free bus ride per state law.

### **Out-of-district Transportation for Special Needs Students**

Our out-of-district special education transportation services are managed by the Assabet Valley Collaborative. Member towns include: Berlin, Boylston, Hudson, Marlboro, Maynard, Nashoba Regional Schools (Lancaster, Bolton, Stow), Northboro, Shrewsbury, Southboro, and Westboro.

Collectively, transportation services are procured and routes devised in a way to reduce costs by matching students from different communities who are enrolled in the same private school. For example, six districts share the cost (\$324.28 daily or \$58,370 annually) to transport students to the Learning Prep School in West Newton, MA. Shrewsbury's share (one-sixth) is \$9,728 annually because of our collaboration.

However, costs continue to significantly increase each year ( see chart below) as daily transportation rates increase and we send more students to these types of placements. Currently, transportation is not one of the costs factored into the Special Education Circuit-Breaker Program. At all levels of government we need to continue to look towards cost-containment strategies and equitable funding mechanisms.



*FY05 and FY06 are "actuals" and FY07 and FY08 are budget figures.*

### **Budget Summary**

We are projecting a 4% rate increase for in-district transportation for FY08 and project no additional buses. Most of enrollment increase will be realized at the high school level where we have capacity to handle the projected enrollment increase.

We recommend that the fee remain the same as FY07 at \$210 per rider with a \$420 family cap and assume that participation in the fee-based programs will remain relatively constant.

You will note that late bus service is recommended for funding in FY08 and does not have any fee associated with it at this point. Based upon the guidance from the committee we could offer this exclusively to those who have purchased a bus pass or are entitled to a free one (75% currently) and this would be in keeping with the "Avoid New Parent Fees" SMART Priority. Alternatively, we could offer the service for a fee. If this route is chosen, I would highly recommend that it be structured as a one-time annual fee to keep it simple and allow us to manage it with existing resources.

Finally, a detailed transportation budget plan is attached as an enclosure.

**SHREWSBURY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**  
*School Bus Ridership Data: 2006-2007*

	Fee-Based \$210 or 23	Fee-Based Online	Free Town	Free/Red. Lunch \$10	Free/Red Family members	Family Cap No Charge	IEP No Charge	DSS No Charge	Total Applications	Enrollment 12/4/2006	Percent on Bus
<b>Public Schools:</b>											
Parker Road							52		52	172	30%
Beal/Beal West	106	17	203	9	12	11	11	1	370	409	90%
Coolidge	121	25	25	26	8	11	4		220	329	67%
Floral	116	25	384	11	9	14	9		568	742	77%
Paton	104	13	90	3	5	22	1	2	240	356	67%
Spring	159	29	83	5		18	1		295	402	73%
Sherwood	145	27	589	28	22	16	4	1	832	947	88%
Oak	633	93	na	59	25	14	9	3	836	947	88%
Shrewsbury High	757	107	na	72	46	8	8	7	1005	1573	64%
<b>Totals: SPS</b>	<b>2141</b>	<b>336</b>	<b>1374</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>114</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>4,418</b>	<b>5,877</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Private Schools:</b>											
St. John's	19	2							21		
St. Mary's	47	6	54			15			122		
Montessori			12						12		
Al Hamra	2		16						18		
Lilliput											
<b>Totals: Private</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>173</b>		
Assabet Valley Voc. High School:									<b>86</b>		
<b>GRAND TOTAL TRANSPORTED</b>										<b>4,677</b>	

SCHOOL BUS UTILIZATION CHART  
2006-2007

MORNING SCHEDULE									
Private Schools: St. Mary's 8:25 St. John's 8:10 Montessori 8:30 Al Hamra 8:30					Private Schools: St. Mary's 8:25 St. John's 8:10 Montessori 8:30 Al Hamra 8:30				
Assabet 7:40/7:50am		Parker Road Lit. Colonial (8:15) Coolidge 8:30/8:45am		All Elem. 9:00/9:15am		Assabet 7:40/7:50am		Parker Road Lit. Colonial (8:15) Coolidge 8:30/8:45am	
High Sch. 7:15/7:25 am		Oak Middle 7:45/8:00am		Sherwood 7:55/8:10am		High Sch. 7:15/7:25 am		Oak Middle 7:45/8:00am	
BUS#		SUSM		SUSM		BUS#		SUSM	
1						1			
2						2			
3						3			
4						4			
5						5			
6						6			
7						7			
8						8			
9						9			
10						10			
11						11			
12						12			
13						13			
14						14			
15						15			
16						16			
17						17			
18						18			
19						19			
20						20			
21						21			
22						22			
23						23			
30						30			
31						31			
32						32			
33						33			
34						34			
35						35			
36						36			
37						37			
38						38			
39						39			
40						40			
41						41			
42						42			
43						43			
50						50			
51						51			
52						52			
53						53			
54						54			
55						55			
60						60			
61						61			
62						62			
63						63			
AV-1						AV-1			
AV-2						AV-2			

MID-DAY SCHEDULE									
Private Schools: St. Mary's 8:25 St. John's 8:10 Montessori 8:30 Al Hamra 8:30					Private Schools: St. Mary's 8:25 St. John's 8:10 Montessori 8:30 Al Hamra 8:30				
Assabet 7:40/7:50am		Parker Road Lit. Colonial (8:15) Coolidge 8:30/8:45am		All Elem. 9:00/9:15am		Assabet 7:40/7:50am		Parker Road Lit. Colonial (8:15) Coolidge 8:30/8:45am	
High Sch. 7:15/7:25 am		Oak Middle 7:45/8:00am		Sherwood 7:55/8:10am		High Sch. 7:15/7:25 am		Oak Middle 7:45/8:00am	
BUS#		SUSM		SUSM		BUS#		SUSM	
1						1			
2						2			
3						3			
4						4			
5						5			
6						6			
7						7			
8						8			
9						9			
10						10			
11						11			
12						12			
13						13			
14						14			
15						15			
16						16			
17						17			
18						18			
19						19			
20						20			
21						21			
22						22			
23						23			
30						30			
31						31			
32						32			
33						33			
34						34			
35						35			
36						36			
37						37			
38						38			
39						39			
40						40			
41						41			
42						42			
43						43			
50						50			
51						51			
52						52			
53						53			
54						54			
55						55			
60						60			
61						61			
62						62			
63						63			
AV-1						AV-1			
AV-2						AV-2			

AFTERNOON SCHEDULE									
Private Schools: St. Mary's 2:30pm St. John's 2:18pm Montessori 3:30pm Al Hamra 3:30pm					Private Schools: St. Mary's 2:30pm St. John's 2:18pm Montessori 3:30pm Al Hamra 3:30pm				
Assabet 2:42pm		Parker Road Lit. Col. Coolidge 3:00pm		All Elem. 3:30pm		Assabet 2:42pm		Parker Road Lit. Col. Coolidge 3:00pm	
High Sch. 1:50pm		Oak Middle 2:20pm		Sherwood 2:30pm		High Sch. 1:50pm		Oak Middle 2:20pm	
BUS#		SUSM		SUSM		BUS#		SUSM	
1						1			
2						2			
3						3			
4						4			
5						5			
6						6			
7						7			
8						8			
9						9			
10						10			
11						11			
12						12			
13						13			
14						14			
15						15			
16						16			
17						17			
18						18			
19						19			
20						20			
21						21			
22						22			
23						23			
30						30			
31						31			
32						32			
33						33			
34						34			
35						35			
36						36			
37						37			
38						38			
39						39			
40						40			
41						41			
42						42			
43						43			
50						50			
51						51			
52						52			
53						53			
54						54			
55						55			
60						60			
61						61			
62						62			
63						63			
AV-1						AV-1			
AV-2						AV-2			

TOTAL AM ROUTES 124

TOTAL MID DAY ROUTES 22

TOTAL PM ROUTES 126

GRAND TOTAL 278

# TRANSPORTATION BUDGET: FY08

Service Type	FY07				FY08				Difference
	Qty. Bus	Daily Rate	Ann. Total	Notes	Qty. Bus	Daily Rate	Ann. Total	Notes	
Regular home-school Homeless SPED Runs: In district & Spec. SPED Trans.	47	\$ 267.29	\$2,261,273	180 days	47	\$ 277.98	\$ 2,364,789		
			\$ 10,000				\$ 25,000		
			\$ 20,311	HS Life skills			\$ 25,000	HS Life skills	
			\$ (470,000)	Less fee revenue			\$ (470,000)	Less fee revenue	\$ 123,205
			\$1,821,584				\$ 1,944,789		
Assabet	2	\$ 155.40	\$ 55,944	180 days	2	\$ 161.62	\$ 58,182	180 days	\$ 2,238
Athletics									
			\$ 20,000	\$35K +/- add'l from athletic revolve			\$ 20,000	\$35K +/- add'l from athletic revolve	\$ -
Late Bus			\$ -				\$ 53,000	Secondary schools	
Monitors			\$ 223,000				223,000		\$ -
SPED: Out of District			\$ 770,000				\$ 1,045,000		\$ 275,000
SPED: Summer/Monitors			\$ 54,400	6 buses, tiered			\$ 67,000		\$ 12,600
GRAND TOTAL			\$2,944,928				\$ 3,410,971		\$ 466,043